



*May 14, 2014*

## **Los Macheteros Investigation and Conviction**

A former member of the violent Puerto Rican separatist group, "Los Macheteros" was sentenced at the federal courthouse in Brooklyn to five years in prison for his part in a 1979 attack on a busload of US Navy personnel. The sentence was imposed by United States District Judge Sterling Johnson Jr.

Now 78 years old, Juan Galloza Acevedo had pleaded guilty last July to racketeering conspiracy, with predicate acts of murder conspiracy and robbery conspiracy for helping to plan and carry out the ambush.

On December 3, 1979, members of Los Macheteros opened fire on a bus carrying Navy personnel affiliated with the Sabana Seca Naval Base in Puerto Rico, while another vehicle was used to block any chance the bus had to escape. Two Sailors were killed and ten others were wounded. Navy Radioman Petty Officer Third Class Emil White and Cryptologic Technician Petty Officer First Class John Ball died in a hail of bullets fired from an AK-47. Petty Officers White and Ball, and the injured personnel, were all awarded the Purple Heart.

Los Macheteros is a militant group devoted to obtaining the independence of Puerto Rico from the United States through violence. Members and associates of Los Macheteros have engaged in many acts of violence, including murder, attempted murder, robbery, and assault.

The FBI and NCIS have pursued this case since the attack almost 35 years ago. John Ball's widow was present at the sentencing hearing, along with Ball's daughter and injured Sailors Allen Bush and Warren Smith.

The Director of the NCIS Office of Forensic Support, Lou Eliopulos, Special Agent Tim Quick, and Mike Zeller from the US Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of New York were able to call the families of the dead and wounded Sailors and let them know about the sentencing. Special Agent Quick says it was the best day of his entire career.

NCIS Director Andrew Traver stated: "Thirty-four years ago, terrorists carried out a coordinated and cold-blooded attack on a U.S. Navy bus carrying 17 enlisted Sailors in Puerto Rico. The Court's sentencing of one of those responsible provides some measure of justice for slain Navy Petty Officers John Ball and Emil White, the ten other Navy personnel wounded in the attack, and their families. I am deeply grateful to our NCIS personnel and partners from the FBI and US Attorney's Office who have remained committed to this case and have persevered for decades in pursuing those responsible for this crime."